

Report to the Planning & Highways Committee meeting to be held on Tuesday 29th July 2025

Revision of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council set aside £15,000 to review Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The Planning and Highways Committee discussed the setting up of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party and also requested information on whether the NP should be revised in a similar format to the existing NP (ie: site based) or whether it should be reviewed on a criteria basis. Locality advised that their understanding of criteria basis is a policy basis. Some members of the Planning and Highways Committee have only recently been co-opted onto the Parish Council, so this report includes a brief overview of neighbourhood plans, advantages and disadvantages, as well as why it is recommended to revise a neighbourhood plan.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

In theory, a NP gives local residents the power to influence the development and growth of their area. NPs were introduced by the Localism Act 2011, with the intention that they would allow communities, through parish councils, to develop statutory policies for the use and development of land within their area. NPs can cover a wide range of issues, including housing, employment, transport, heritage and environmental matters. Once approved by a community referendum, a NP is adopted by the Borough Council (ie: it is considered 'made'). It is also then part of the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's = Swindon Borough Council's) legal framework for making decisions on planning applications.

Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan can be found on Swindon Borough Council's (SBC's) website here:

[Wroughton neighbourhood plan | Swindon Borough Council](#)

What is a 5 year Housing Land Supply and why is it relevant?

A 5 year land supply is a supply of specific [deliverable](#) sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing (and appropriate buffer) against a [housing requirement](#) set out in adopted strategic policies, or against a local housing need figure..... in accordance with paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

According to the Government, in decision-taking, if an authority cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, including any appropriate buffer, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply, as set out in [paragraph 11d of the National Planning Policy Framework](#). Government guidance can be found here: [Housing supply and delivery - GOV.UK](#) In the past, this has meant that planning applications for developments on land not identified for development in Wroughton's NP were granted at appeal, one reason being that at SBC could not demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply.

However, the Government published updated planning practice guidance on housing supply and delivery in February 2024 which suggests that LPAs at the Reg.18 or Reg.19 stage or with plans submitted for examination only need to demonstrate a 4-year supply. SBC is scheduled to start their Reg 18 consultation on the revised Local Plan in September this year. NB: there appears to be a caveat, that the calculation of a **4** year housing land supply must be considered against the supply expected to be built out over the next **4** years, potentially with a 20% buffer. The Deputy Clerk has not been able to find anything on SBC's website regarding whether SBC could evidence a 4 year housing land supply; SBC has a *Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement*, which states at para 6.2 on page 12: *'The calculation in Figure 5 concludes a land supply position of 4.87 years. The position has improved since the previous 2021 statement and the deviation from demonstrating a five-year supply is considered marginal.'* [Five year housing land supply statement 2023 to 2028 .pdf](#)

There is a more detailed explanation in a blog here: [Changes to 5YHLS under the revised NPPF: Not Great, Not Terrible](#)

Following the previous Committee meeting, the Deputy Clerk contacted Locality to ask for advice and information about reviewing the NP on a policy basis, as opposed to continuing a site basis.

Who are Locality and what do/ did they do?

Locality is *'the national membership network supporting local community organisations to be strong and successful'*. They have provided some free advice by phone, as well as links to their toolkits (see below) and also advised reading Newport Pagnell Neighbourhood Plan [Newport Pagnell NP3](#) (population 16,000+) as an example of a policy based NP. Locality used to administer the Government funding for parish councils to write and review NPs. However, the Government recently withdrew that funding, therefore any planning consultants' costs must now be funded fully by the Parish Council.

Locality provided the following verbal advice:

Any non-planning issues could be added to the NP as an appendix of potential projects. However, these would not count as part of the NP so would not be enforceable, but would be more of a 'wish-list'. When setting up the Working Party, make it clear that a NP cannot prohibit development, but it can state where development would be acceptable and what it would look like.

When reviewing NPs, consider:

- Does Swindon Borough Council's Local Plan address the issues which are important to the community? If not, can the Parish Council do this via the Neighbourhood Plan?
- NB: a NP cannot do everything. It can only address planning issues. EG: it could not specify views from windows, but it could protect important local views.
- Was the evidence base for the existing Wroughton NP prepared a long time ago? If so, it will be out of date and will need to be re-done.
- You will find out what issues need to be addressed by consulting the local community - please read the toolkit on community engagement.
- When deciding whether to review the existing Wroughton NP on a site basis, or criteria basis (policy basis), look at the issues which need to be addressed; a criteria / policy based NP could include policies for:
 - Sports infrastructure
 - Front & rear garden sizes
 - Housing density
 - Building materials (as well as design codes or guidance)
 - Protection of public open spaces by Local Green Space allocations
 - Enhance local biodiversity. EG: provide for green/ wildlife corridors, provide areas of land for biodiversity offset
 - Improve/ reduce traffic congestion by specifying a drop-off facility for any new schools
 - ?? new cemetery??
 - Provide for local needs which are not met by the Local Plan. EG: integrated cycle and pedestrian routes for all new development sites
 - Any planning issues which come out of engagement and consultation with residents

Locality Toolkits

- [NP Roadmap online full.pdf](#)
- [How to implement, monitor, and review your made neighbourhood plan - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)
- [How to write planning policies for your Neighbourhood Plan - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)
- [Engaging with your community in a meaningful way - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

Does the Parish Council need to review Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan?

The verbal advice received by the Deputy Clerk on an information webinar by the Society of Local Council Clerks is that there is no legal responsibility for parish councils to review a neighbourhood plan once made. However, if it's not reviewed, and/ or there is a risk that it no longer complies with/ supports the Borough's Local Plan, then the Borough could decide to withhold the additional 10% CiL which any parish with an adopted NP receives. The only way to challenge this would be through the courts, which would be extremely costly. The advice therefore was that NPs should be reviewed or risk losing the extra CiL*.

Advantages and Disadvantages of having an up-to-date (reviewed and revised) Neighbourhood Plan

Advantages	Disadvantages
Statutory weight: Local planning authorities and planning inspectors must take a NP into account when making decisions on planning applications. (with the caveat on the LPA being able to evidence the required housing land supply)	Resource Intensive and time consuming: Involves extensive consultation, evidence gathering, plan writing, and effort to maintain the interest of both working party members and residents.
Focus on local needs: can address priorities which are not addressed by the Local Plan.	Financial Cost: community engagement, consultants' fees, materials, plan writing. Locality funding has been withdrawn.
Enables residents to shape and support housing development within their local community: eg support the provision of affordable housing.	Limited Scope: Cannot override the strategic policies of the local plan. Eg: it cannot promote less development than that outlined in the local plan
Increased Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL)*: For areas with an adopted neighbourhood plan, the neighbourhood portion increases by 10% from 15% to 25%. This higher allocation helps the Parish Council fund projects that directly address local needs identified in the NP.	Complex legal requirements: must conform to law and national policies, local planning strategy, may be subject to an independent examination, may need to be approved by a local referendum. Eg: Despite written confirmation from SBC that Highworth Town Council had met all legal requirements, the independent examiner advised it was necessary to carry out a further Regulation 14 consultation to meet the procedural requirement relating to the Modification Statement.
The benefits of having greater control over the future of the parish can outweigh the challenges and can achieve long-term positive outcomes for the local community.	

*Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that most developers must pay when creating a new dwelling, or building new developments which create net additional floor space of 100 square metres or more. A portion of the CIL collected, known as the neighbourhood portion, is allocated directly to local communities. Typically, 15% of CIL funds are passed to town or parish councils for them to decide how to spend on local infrastructure projects. For areas with an adopted neighbourhood plan, the neighbourhood portion increases to 25%. This higher allocation helps communities fund infrastructure projects that directly address local needs identified in the neighbourhood plan.

Recommendation:

Members consider, before setting up the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, whether the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan should be reviewed on a policy basis.

Reasons:

- **The laws and regulations surrounding neighbourhood plans are very complex.**
- **The policies would apply regardless of the sites proposed in Swindon Borough Council's draft Local Plan or their final, approved Local Plan.**
- **It's possible to have a policy specific to an individual site if required.**
- **A policy based neighbourhood plan would have the advantage that the review could start now, rather than wait for the outcome of Swindon Borough Council's various statutory consultations.**
- **Revision of the neighbourhood plan on a site basis may require work to be re-done if the proposed sites change throughout the consultation periods, especially in light of the information from Cllr Matty Courtliff about the potential consequences of the recent decision by Swindon Borough Council's Planning Committee to reject the planning application for 707 homes on the Oasis site, which could result in additional housing development sites being proposed in other areas of the Borough, including Wroughton.**